

## **Whatcom County Fire District 5**

2030 Benson Road Point Roberts, WA 98281 Office 360-945-3473 Fax 360-945-2526

20 July 2020

The following letter is written to United States President Donald Trump, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, the United States Congressional and Senatorial bodies including their parallel officials in Canada, Washington State and Whatcom County elected officials.

I write the attached letter for the American exclave community of Point Roberts, Washington. A community caught between a pandemic and the politics of two countries.

Christopher Carleton, Fire Chief



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Point Roberts, Washington is an exclave of the United States created during the 1846 treaty that designated the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel as the boundary between the US and Canada. It is an approximately five square mile parcel at the tip of the Tsawwassen, British Columbia peninsula that is now the permanent home to more than 1,000 American citizens and serves as a summer home to approximately 4,000 part-time residents - American and Canadian alike. Though a part of Whatcom County, Washington, its connection to the United States by ground requires transit through more than 20 miles of Canada and two international border crossings.

Point Roberts has lived in close harmony with Canada throughout its existence. Citizens of Point Roberts and British Columbia have always enjoyed relatively free transit and trade, but citizens of Point Roberts are particularly dependent on unimpeded transit through Canada for everything from advanced health care to basic services that are not duplicated in our small community. The economy of Point Roberts is strongly dependent on international influx as an indispensable element of commerce. For the past several months, however, through no fault of either of our nations and certainly as no fault of our interconnected communities, Point Roberts' citizens are living under the effective equivalent of house arrest, with only the most restricted of access to the basics of life supplied by the world outside our exclave existence.

Land transit through Canada has always been the most effective and efficient means of travel for our residents to reach the other part of our country. Few can afford or have access to air and sea options. Given the unique challenge of our geographical location and the growing toll this takes on all aspects of our community from its economic viability to our collective mental health, I ask that the US and Canada take unparalleled efforts to realize our community's expanded predicament and help us forge ideas to safely reconcile our pressing needs for open transit through Canada, balanced with the demands of our current emergency state.

The existing public health crisis is unprecedented in our time. We all understand that drastic measures have been required to ensure the safety of our respective citizenry. In many ways, our community is suffering disproportionately from the compounding impacts of the profound isolation now being experienced. As we are reasonably certain this crisis is likely to persist for a very significant length of time, we must find some effective means to mitigate the escalating impacts on the physical and mental health, safety, and wellbeing of the Point Roberts community without compromising the safety and security of our Canadian partners.

Point Roberts has been, to date, perhaps the safest community in the US with respect to COVID-19. The Fire Department, in conjunction with our local clinic, has sponsored continuous testing with approximately half our permanent residents tested. I am currently not aware of any positive cases within our community. We intend to continue this effort as long as may be necessary, as well as to aggressively pursue any and all public health measures made available to us to ensure that we maintain the safety of our community throughout this crisis.

Our community is a place where US and Canadian cultures and values intersect, interact, and blend in ways that have allowed us all to prosper. I ask that both governments recognize the unique circumstances we face as an integrated trans-border community, and find a way for US, dual citizens and green card holders of Point Roberts to transit openly as needed to the United States mainland. Canadians or others who legally own property in our community, and can prove this ownership, should also be granted access as appropriately required during this historic event to care for such property. It is incumbent on us to find unprecedented solutions to navigate this time in our history by working together and maintaining our respect and basic values as people to one another.

This pandemic has noticeably shaken the foundation of relationships throughout the world. I implore you to not allow it to inadvertently jeopardize the harmony our two great countries share and that which has been created between Point Roberts and our Canadian neighbors.

Sincerely,

Christopher Carleton, Fire Chief Whatcom County Fire District 5

Point Roberts, Washington